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Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08
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UNCLAS JOHANNESBURG 1641

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, SF
SUBJECT: US COMPANIES FIRST IN REMOVAL OF DISCRIMINATORY WORK PRACTICES

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES SURVEY COMPLETED BY FINE SPAMER ASSOCIATES LTD. OF JOHANNESBURG HAS FOUND US COMPANIES IN SOUTH AFRICA AHEAD OF OTHERS, INCLUDING UK AND SA FIRMS, IN REMOVING DISCRIM-INATORY WORK PRACTICES. ARTICLE ON SUBJECT IN CITIZEN OF JUNE 30 IS QUOTED BELOW:

1. BEGIN QUOTE: COMPANIES WITH US TIES OPERATING IN SOUTH AFRICA ARE AHEAD OF OTHERS IN REMOVING DISCRIMINATORY WORK PRACTICES -- AND SOUTH AFRICAN COMPANIES TEND TO LAG BEHIND BOTH US AND UK COMPANIES IN THIS REGARD. THIS EMERGES FROM THE FIRST-EVER NON-WHITE ADVANCEMENT SURVEY TO BE UNDERTAKEN COMPREHENSIVELY IN THIS COUNTRY BY FINE SPAMER ASSOCIATES, HUMAN RESOURCES CONSULTANTS, ASSISTED BY ICL SOUTH AFRICA WHICH UNDERTOOK THE DATA PROCESSING. " BUT
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THE GAP AMONG US, UK AND SOUTH AFRICAN COMPANIES IS SUFFICIENTLY SMALL TO BE CLOSED QUICKLY, GIVEN THE WILL TO DO SO," SAYS MR BERNARD CHALMERS , THE CONSULTANT OF FINE SPAMER ASSOCIATES.

2. THE SURVEY, WHICH WAS CONDUCTED ON A CONFIDENTIAL BASIS TO KEEP THE NAMES OF THE RESPONDENTS ANONYMOUS WITH THE RESULTS GOING TO THE TRUSTEE, FINANSBANK, WAS COMPLETED

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BY 167 COMPANIES IN ALL SECTION OF THE ECONOMY. COLLECTIVELY, THEY EMPLOY JUST ON A MILLION PEOPLE OF WHOM 87 PERCENT ARE NON-WHITES AND 13 PERCENT WHITES. JUST OVER HALF THE COMPANIES ARE SOUTH AFRICAN-OWNED, 28 PERCENT HAVE STRONG LINKS WITH THE UK AND 15 PERCENT WITH THE US. ANOTHER INTERESTING FACT TO EMERGE FROM THE SURVEY IS THAT THE AVERAGE REPORTED MINIMUM WAGE OF NON-WHITES WAS R135 A MONTH, EXCLUDING THE COST OF FRINGE BENEFITS.

3 " MOST COMPANIES BASED THEIR LOW-LEVEL WAGES ON SOME FORM OF MINIMUM WAGE, DETERMINED BY A COST-OF-LIVING INDEX", SAID MR. CHALMERS. " MOST ALSO PROVIDE THE USUAL FRINGE BENEFITS IRRESPECTIVE OF RACE, THE MAIN EXCEPTIONS BEING MEDICAL AID, HOUSING ASSISTANCE AND LIFE ASSURANCE". ON THE SUBJECT OF TRADE UNIONS AND LIAISON COMMITTEES, THE SURVEY REVEALED THAT WHILE MOST COMPANIES WOULD NOT STAND IN THE WAY OF THEIR STAFF BELONGING TO TRADE UNIONS, THEY WOULD PREFER THEM NOT TO. " IT DOES NOT APPEAR, HOWEVER, THAT COMPANIES ARE AGAINST THE IDEA OF ORGANIZED LABOUR OR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING SINCE MORE THAN 80 PERCENT SAID THEY HAD ESTABLISHED LIAISON ON WORKS COMMITTEES", ADDED MR. CHALMERS. UNIONS ARE SEEN AS RESTRICTING THE USE THAT MAY BE MADE OF LABOUR AND AT TIMES DID NOT ACT IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF EMPLOYEES. SOME COMPANIES EVEN SAID EMPLOYEES HAD TO ACCEPT INFERIOR FRINGE BENEFITS, COMPARED TO THOSE OFFERED BY THE COMPANY, BECAUSE THEY ARE FOCED TO BELONG TO UNCLASSIFIED

A UNION OR TRADE ASSOCIATION.

4. TRAINING WEIGHED HEAVILY IN THE SURVEY. IT WAS GRATIFYING TO NOTE THAT THERE WAS EXPECTED TO BE AN INCREASE IN TRAINING GIVEN TO BLACKS DURING THE COMING YEAR. SENIOR EXECUTIVES OF PARTICIPATING COMPANIES COMPLETED A SEPARATE PART OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND ALL BUT 10 PERCENT STRESSED THAT GREATER PRODUCTIVITY WOULD BE ACHIEVED IF THERE WAS NO RACIAL DIS-CRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES. ONLY A SMALL MINORITY SAID THAT REMOVING DISCRIMINATION COULD CREATE FRICTION BETWEEN RACES." MOST EXECUTIVES SAID THEY WERE PREPARED TO WORK CLOSELY WITH NON-WHITES", MR CHALMERS ELABORATED. "MORE THAN 80 PERCENT ACTUALLY SAID THEY WERE PREPARED TO HAVE A NON-WHITE AS A SUPERIOR". AND, A SIGNIFICANT FACT WHICH AUGURED WELL FOR THE FUTURE, NEARLY TWO-THIRDS OF THE EXECUTIVES SURVEYED SAID THEY BELIEVE DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES COULD BE REMOVED WITHIN FIVE YEARS.

5. " THE SURVEY HAS PROVED A MARKED SUCCESS AND WE WILL DEFINITELY UPDATE IT NEXT YEAR," SAID MR CHALMERS. HE ADDED THAT HE HOPED MORE COMPANIES WOULD PARTICIPATE NEXT YEAR TO GIVE IT STILL GREATER VALIDITY. NEXT YEAR, TOO IT WOULD

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BE POSSIBLE TO DRAW COMPARISONS WITH THIS YEAR'S SURVEY
TO SEE HOW ADVANCEMENT PROGRAMMES WERE PROGRESSING AND
WHETHER ATTITUDES WERE CHANGING OR NOT. THE DETAILED
FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY -- A DEFINITIVE REPORT OF SOME 300
PAGES -- IS ONLY SENT TO PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS.
END QUOTE.
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